



Town of Bristol

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LORD'S PRAYER ROCK

A statement on the record | Monday, August 31, 2026

From the Selectboard Chair

There has been a good deal of coverage and comment about Lord's Prayer Rock over the past few weeks, and some of it has left the impression that the Town is considering moving or removing it. I want to set out what the record actually shows.

The rock is a listed historic site. The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation evaluated it in 1977 and added it to the State Historic Sites and Structures list in 1980. The Division's own statement of significance reads: "To the people of Bristol, this is the central landmark in town and is something for which the town is known." The inscription dates to 1891, commissioned by Dr. Joseph C. Greene of South Starksboro, who paid William McGee and a second man to carve it.

Bristol chose to look after it, by a vote. Dr. Greene maintained the rock himself until he died in 1899. In 1908 the citizens of Bristol voted at town meeting to assume stewardship of it. The Village bought the surrounding land in 1941, and the Town has owned it since the village and town merged in 1995. For most of the time since, the park has been cared for by volunteers: the Boy Scouts, the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club, the Home Demonstration Club, and more recently Eagle Scout projects.

This question is not new, and it has always been answered the same way. Proposals to move the rock, cut a section from it, or blast it away have come before this town in 1941, 1957, 1958, 1974 and 1985. Voters rejected them at village meetings in 1957 and 1974. The others were dropped. In 2011 a bicycle and pedestrian study looked at two sidewalk alignments through the corridor and neither was pursued. The State evaluated the rock in 1977, at a time when road safety at the site was already under discussion, and listed it anyway three years later. In eighty-five years, no board and no vote has ever gone the other way.

Nothing before the Selectboard proposes to change that. A resident raised road-safety concerns at the Board's meeting of July 13, 2026. A letter asking that the rock be removed was received into the record at the meeting of August 10, 2026. On August 24, 2026, the Conservation Commission presented its draft management plan for Lord's Prayer Rock Park. No action was taken on the rock at any of the three, and there is no proposal before the Board to alter, move, or remove it.

On safety, here is what the records actually show. At my request, Police Chief Bruce Nason searched the Town's crash records for the area at and around the rock going back to 2009. He found nine reported crashes in seventeen years. In one of them a vehicle struck the rock. That was in 2012, and the



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cause recorded by the department was driver inattention: the driver reached for something in the glove compartment and drifted right.

In none of the nine was the rock a contributing factor. That is the Bristol Police Department's finding, from its own files. The other eight involved backing out of a driveway, following too closely, unsafe passing, a deer in the road, driving too fast for conditions, and, in 2010, a pedestrian in dark clothing whom a driver could not see because of an oncoming vehicle's headlights.

For context, state crash data for VT 116 in Bristol from 2010 onward records thirty-four crashes in the downtown core, eighteen at the Lincoln Road junction, and fourteen in the Maple Street area. No location on VT 116 in Bristol, the rock included, has recorded a fatality in that period.

Two things these numbers cannot tell us. Crashes never reported to anyone appear in no record. And raw counts are not adjusted for traffic volume, which is far higher through the village than out at the rock. Residents have raised safety concerns here in good faith, and the Selectboard is not dismissing them.

Making travel past the rock safer is worth pursuing on its own terms. At the August 24, 2026 meeting and in correspondence, residents and board members raised signage, pavement markings, and moving the reduced-speed sign further out on the approach into the village. Those are changes the Town can make without altering a historic site, and they deserve a serious look.

All of the correspondence on this is public record and has gone to all five members. Public Forum is open at the start of every regular meeting, five minutes per person, on any topic.

Thank you to everyone who has written or come to a meeting.

Ian Albinson

Selectboard Chair, Town of Bristol